

Cross-Cultural Values Comparison between Chinese and Sub-Saharan Africans

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Abstract

With a Sino-African trade growing at 40% a year and a steadily growing economy above 5% in Africa are challenging Chinese companies and individual Chinese businessmen to reassess broad stereotypes and globalization strategies in this continent. This paper reviews a comparative analysis of fundamental values and interpersonal relations between Chinese and Sub-Saharan Africans, and also their impact on the intercultural activities. It outlines differences and synergies amongst African and Chinese cultures. The study aims to introduce some important recommendations and factors, which may have an essential impact on Chinese companies operating in Sub-Saharan Africa. It provides in addition empirical insights of a set of values that may influence Chinese and Sub-Saharan Africans' behaviours. New suggestions related to cross-cultural activities are reported to implement adequate human resource management policies within these companies. The paper includes implications for the development of new cross-cultural strategies and restructuring of the human resource policies.

Keywords: Cross-cultural Values; Identity; Cross-Cultural Management; Group Affiliations; Intercultural Communication; Beliefs

Introduction

According to many studies, cross-cultural issues are among the most central and most persistent factors that influence international business activities. Operating internationally, companies usually face a lot of cross-cultural challenges such as understanding differences in communication patterns and styles, values, principles, organizational structures, preferences for leadership approach, management practices, and different paths of decision-making. Needless to say that the wrong understanding and inappropriate handling cultural differences can usually cause organizational conflicts and may cause severe inefficiencies and competitive disadvantages.

There is no "one" African culture or society, as it exists in many people's mind. Africa is vast, comprised 54 independent nations, 1, 02 billion people, and over 3,000 ethnic groups speaking more than 1,000 indigenous languages—in addition to the six European languages (French, English, Portuguese, German, Spanish, and Italian) carried over from prior colonization. Sub-Saharan Africa is culturally complex and commonly referred to as "black" Africa. Certainly, they share many cultural backgrounds that have been carried for centuries, but with enormous variations. For example, Congo is not Togo and Togo is not Rwanda, those differences exist not only among countries as well as within countries. These common beliefs and core cultural values transcend national boundaries, languages, and ethnicities and form a fundamental cultural unit. It is vital that expatriate managers have a basic knowledge of cross-cultural differences and allegations from their host countries.

It is undeniable that Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the world's fastest-growing regions, and on a global scale there is a growing recognition of Africa as a major destination with vast stores of untapped opportunity, proven oil reserves, and critically important mineral resources, such as gold, diamonds, chromium, copper, wood, etc. Besides, with a Sino-African trade growing at 40% a year, African steadily growing economy over 5%, there is an undeniable sense that over the next decades Africa is positioned to take its place in the global economy. These figures are challenging Chinese companies and individual Chinese businessmen to reassess broad stereotypes and globalization strategies. Today, there is about a thousand of Chinese companies have been relocated to Africa in factories and farms, retail shops, mining, oil exploration as well as construction.

However, according to Herbert Jauch (2009) reports on the working conditions among Chinese companies in Angola, Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe; researchers found a “common trait” of the Chinese companies being “among the worst employers everywhere”. Thus, it is important to understand whether it is just a question of cross-cultural misunderstanding within these companies or they are based on other external factors. Numerous studies have been published about Chinese investments in Africa, but not yet or quite few on the Sino-African cross-cultural values and Human Resource Management (HRM) outlooks, which constitutes an important research gap and justifies the present study. As mentioned above, in addition to its ancestral culture, while Africans have been influenced by Occidental civilizations during the colonization, Chinese have inherited from Confucianism, Buddhism and Shintoism influence. Consequently, it is obvious that these two cultural backgrounds are distant enough to allow cultural differences to be easily observed. This paper attempts to offer a comprehensive overview of these two heterogenic cultural backgrounds and to assess an in-depth analysis of their cross-cultural values, convergences and differences.

Affiliation and Identity

Africa is the most heterogeneous continent in the world—linguistically, culturally, and ethnically. In business, identity in Africa can be a complex and sensitive issue. Primarily, identity in Africa still revolves around ethnic affiliation; expatriate managers need to tread carefully around personal questions as conversation starters, particularly as they may relate to ethnicity, which constitutes a sensitive subject in Africa. Identity among “black” Africans is based on ethnicity, linguistic and geographic affiliation as opposed to race or nationality. For example, “ethnically speaking,” an African may be in this order Lari (ethnic group), Kongo (linguistic group), South or North (Regional appurtenance), Congo (nationality), Central African (regional affiliation), and African (ancestral origin) all at once. Awareness of these distinctions is essential in designing strategies to deal effectively with local counterparts. Diversity is not about race, since over 90% of the population is black African; it is instead based on membership in a variety of ethnic groups. For example with its 3.8 million people, ethnologist recognizes 62 spoken languages in the Republic of Congo, 15 principal ethnic groups with more than 70 subgroups. Being aware of language differences, status differences, various ethnic perceptions, and stereotypes may make a competitive advantage possible into this marketplace. The choice of business partners to represent a company to the general populace stays a sensitive issue.

However with its 1.3 billion people, Chinese can be divided into 56 ethnic groups, with the major called “Han= 汉”. Ethnologist recognizes 292 living languages within them. Even though, there exist great differences in terms of political, social and economic dimensions between the mainland Chinese and from other places where Chinese culture dominates, there is still possible to identify certain core cultural values that have been held in common by the Chinese people, no matter where they live; mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan or overseas. These core values are unique and consistent, shaped by a tradition of four thousand years of history and maintained by the same written language called “汉字Hanzi”. These values distinguish them not only from African or Western cultures, but also from other Eastern cultures such as Japanese or Korean culture. Chinese cultural values and identity are shaped on three major categories: *traditional culture, communist ideology, and more recently western values*. The traditional Chinese culture encompasses diverse and sometimes competing schools of thought, including Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, etc. Nevertheless, it is undisputedly that Confucianism is the most influential thought, which forms the foundation of the Chinese cultural traditions and still provides the basis and norms of Chinese interpersonal behaviour in business and daily life.

Collectivism vs. Individualism

A popular African axiom says: “*Go the way that many people go; if you go alone, you will have reason to lament*”. The African idea of security depends on personal identification within the community and thus individuals must go where the community goes. With regard to Kongo people (from the kingdom of Kongo), people should go to the “Mbongi” or “community centre”, which represents a social, political, judicial and religious centre; beyond the community “*stands the void in strong and ever present contrast. Outside this ancestrally chartered system there lay no possible life; a man without lineage is a man without citizenship, without identity, and therefore without allies...and thus, a man outside his clan is like a grasshopper which has lost its wings*”. Africans believe that individuals who live communally are protected.

Therefore, individualism as an ideology of life is not encouraged; living together as brothers and sisters express the extended family system in Africa and a person can only be truly safe in a safe community. As noted by Biko (1978): "Poverty was a foreign concept. It never was considered repugnant to ask one's neighbours for help if one was struggling. In most cases there was a mutual assistance between individuals, tribes, chiefs and kings; even in spite of war". Thus, in ancient time, community may have poor people but not beggars. The solidarity was fostered to bring the community together. Regrettably, as noted by Miahouakana (2008), because of this loyalty toward the community attachment, many Africans still clasp on their leaders even though these latter have demonstrated critical derives on their leaderships. However, if the communal life is encouraged among Africans, the collectivism characterized the core of the Chinese human relationships. Yau (1994) noted four aspects that exemplify the collectivism within Chinese people: *group orientation, interdependence, face, and respect for authority*. Hofstede (1980) indicated that Chinese as well as other Asian people are collectivism. Collectivistic people view themselves as an integral part of in-group such as the family and co-workers (Triandis, 1995). Maintaining harmony within an in-group is often regarded as a duty of all group members. An important concept relevant to in-group harmony is face (*面子* *mianzi*). Giving face to others (showing respect) and avoiding losing one's own face (being humiliated) help maintain in-group harmony. Thus, according to Hu (1944), losing face would make it difficult for a person to function properly within the community and constitutes Chinese interpersonal behaviour in business.

Human Relationship and Reciprocity

In Africa, the philosophy of life is characterized by "*live and let's live together*". Relationship between individuals recognizes their worth as human beings, and not only what they possess or they can do for each other. However, in terms of reciprocity, people should help one another without demanding immediate or an exact equivalent remuneration. Everyone is mindful that each person has something to contribute to his welfare, sometimes and somehow. The art of dialogue and conversation is a cherished value in African human relationship. People freely discuss their problems and look for suggestions and solutions together. The unwillingness to talk to people about either private or public affairs can be interpreted as bad manners or sign of enmity. Above all Africans believe that he who discusses his affairs with others hardly runs into difficulties or makes mistakes in the execution of his plans. According to Kongo people (Miahouakana, 2008), anyone who seeks public opinion does not enter into trouble, and the one who tells people what he does never suffers mishap. Discussions should respect individuals' sentiments; hence conversations that may cause misgivings should be avoided. Yoruba people (from west of Nigeria) say: "*The fingers of a man who has only nine are not counted in his presence*". Besides, men have the obligation to cater the less fortunate, defining thus rights and duties, responsibilities and obligations toward others. This perception of the human relationship states the climate of the African business environment.

Human relationship among Chinese pulls its doctrine on the Confucianism. It is basically the behavioural or moral doctrines that teach and influence human relationships, social structures, virtuous behaviour and work ethics. In Confucianism, rules are spelled out for the social behaviour of every individual, governing the entire range of human interactions in society. According to Chen (1986), the basic of Confucius orientation is distilled into five constant virtues: *humanity, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and faithfulness*, which defined the basic of human relations and principles called "*五伦* *Wulun*". These relationships are structured to deliver optimum benefits to both parties. Among these five principles, three are family relations, which clearly show the importance of family in Chinese society and account for its paternalism, which particularly lead to a paternalistic management style. Confucian "*Doctrine of the Mean*" encourages people to avoid competition and conflict, and maintaining inner harmony as well as to adopt a non-assertive approach to conflict resolution. Chinese believe that once a relation is established, it should not be easily broken. *Guanxi* (*关系* *relationship*) represents the main catalyst of the Chinese business and it cannot be sustained between two parties if there is no need of reciprocity. It is true that the concept of reciprocity is universal but in case of Chinese people it has a particular salience. When internalized in both parties, the norm obliges the one who has first received a benefit to repay it at a later time. Consequently, there may be less hesitancy in being the first but the transaction will only take place once there is a mutual benefit for the involved parties.

Hospitality and Trust/Mistrust

Hospitality is one of the main African values, which is still alive among Africans. Africans easily incorporate strangers and give them lands to settle hoping that they would leave one day, and the land would revert to the owner. For Africans, the person cannot be completely opted out of his original community. Therefore, strangers are always warmly welcomed into their community. For instance, *“In the traditional African culture, whenever there is food to be taken, everyone present is invited to participate even if the food was prepared for far less number of people without anticipating the arrival of visitors. It would be a height of incredible bad manners for one to eat anything however small, without sharing it with anyone else present, or at least expressing the intention to do so”*. However, visitors should not take advantage of their hosts. A Kongo proverb says: *“Ġhaba dila, kaba neninaka roko”*, which means, *“You should not hurt your host from where you have been eating.”* Guests should not harm or leave bad impressions to their hosts since you may never know if you will need again their assistance. This concept depicts somehow Africans attitude toward business.

However, it is obvious that for Chinese people, chronic suspicion prevails. Chinese appear to be quite suspicious and cold toward strangers with whom relationships have not been established. Nobody could be trusted except one’s kinfolk in the form of the extended family. Consequently, the social network is first consisted of family members, relatives, friends, classmates, and colleagues, which represent the immediate sphere on which trust is established and developed. Such obsession in trust defines the behaviour of Chinese people in business, and why most important key positions within Chinese organisations are mainly supervised directly or indirectly by them. During the transactions a deal of adulteration of goods is practiced, weights and measures are juggled. To protect one’s interest and ensure that opportunistic behaviours such as cheating are kept to a minimum, trust must be established before any serious business relationship can be cemented. Trust-based *“关系网 guanxiwang”* is the alternative to the market which is often characterized by opportunistic behaviours. They believe that exchange relationships based on personal trust will survive greater stress and display a better adaptability. Contrary to Westerners or Africans, for Chinese once the trust is established between both sides, it is not necessary for transitions to be sealed by a formal contractual assignment.

Religion and Beliefs

It has been admitted by many authors that Africans do not know how to live without religion. The traditional African society was almost characterized by the absence of atheist; religion in the indigenous African culture was incorporated into the society’s institutions. It was and stills an integral part of the entire culture. For Africans, religion is something practical; each action is reflective to one’s religious concepts and practices. It is the basis of the social morality. For instance, Idowu Bolaji (1962) said: *“With the Yoruba, morality is certainly the fruit of religion. They do not make any attempt to separate the two; and it is impossible, for them to do so without disastrous consequences”*. The traditional African culture tailors on its moral and religious attitudes. Thus, *“the ancient African was far from being an abode of laissez-faire morality. There were strict moral principles and determined code of conduct, which established the nature of right-doings, and custom established penalties and taboos against malefactors. Moral sanctions were mainly religious sanctions and were effective”*. The religion has also been the core of traditional Africans’ life, no matter on whom they believe or attached their faith. However, Chinese are characterised for having a deep belief in the forces of death and of a life after death. In the ancient time, from emperors to peasants, life and death were inseparable and continuous.

One reason is that the Chinese believed their ancestors’ souls could treat them well or harm according to how good or poorly they revered them. Post-mortem rituals that society today regards as ancient Chinese religious practice were merely threads of everyday life, interlaced into a cultural fabric as spiritual as it was secular. Chinese religion is not like attending church, synagogue or mosque, but rather carrying out duties that honoured previous generations of one’s kin. Imperial tombs were filled with fabulous riches, sealed with human sacrifice in the earlier dynasties, at least and guarded like the palaces of the living. Peasants, meanwhile, buried their dead with far more modest accompaniments: crops from their farm fields or other symbols of goodwill, but no less devotion. Intermingled with such piety are beliefs in spirits that governed the stars, weather, forces of nature, animals, etc. Despite a strong cultural emphasis on magical and mystical forces, ancestral worship is not merely folk religion. Chinese monarchs believed imperial ancestors dwelled in heaven with a supreme spirit and ruler called *“帝=Di”*, who also determined the fate and success of each royal administration.

Time and Time Perception

In the African culture, time is polychromous; a person can do three or more things within a given period simultaneously. In a typical village, a woman could be at the same time cooking, preparing her cassava, attending to her baby, and would also be prepared to attend to any other duties coming up. Combining several responsibilities is one of the cultural factors stimulated by the communalism life in Africa. Therefore, the time should be controlled by the man but not to be controlled by the time. This does not mean, nor imply that Africans have no sense of punctuality in their concept of time; as it is common to hear about the “African time”; i.e. the absence of punctuality. Nevertheless, according to traditional Africans, time can be socialized and should be programmed into socio-cultural norms of human behaviour and inter-personal relationships. Therefore, the death of one person in the neighbourhood could change appointments previously taken even for business purpose. The time is first related to the social obligations and comes later the professionalism. An African proverb says (Nwankwo et al., 1975): “*where the runner reaches, there the walker will reach eventually*”. The most important thing is to arrive; beyond these social obligations, Africans do have and conceive the time in the punctual sense; however they do not sacrifice social duties and human relations on the clock-time punctuality.

General speaking, Chinese are quite punctual, but the time conception of Chinese has other connotations. It implies on duration of carrying out a relationship. Once a relation is established, it is hard to break and once broken, it is very difficult to re-establish. Continuity indicates that Chinese people are long-term oriented. Once *guangxi* is established, both parties will try their best to keep this relationship by reciprocating benefits. Chinese have a great respect of the past-time; it is represented by strong family traditions and worship of ancestors. Van Oort (1970) indicated that Chinese people are highly history minded. They have a strong admiration of their culture, which survived several thousand years. According to Yau, Chinese are risks averse and less innovative since it was safer to follow the traditional proven methods, which have been worked for generations than to try new facilities, which could cause losses in business.

The Sense of Respect toward Others

According to William Conton (1966), Africans generally have a deep and ingrained respect for old age, and even when they can find nothing to admire in an old man, they will not easily forget that his grey hair have earned him right to courtesy and politeness. Thus for *Kongo* people, the parents are perceived to be terrestrial gods, and should have dignity and respect. Elders are believed to be teachers and directors of the young. He who listens to elders is like one who consults an oracle since the oracles are believed to give infallible truth, however elders are also believed to say the truth and their words and instructions are heeded to for the promotion of good behaviour among the young. Nevertheless, a *Kongo* proverb says: “*Mpu buzitu ntu buzitu*”, which means “in order to be respected, you should also respect others no matter their age and status”. The respect given to elders has its practical effect in the maintenance of custom and traditions; the respect is mutual, without a mutual respect there is no way to establish a good business or interpersonal relationships.

For Chinese, the respect could be expressed by the perception of the “*脸 lian*” or “*face*”. *Lian* can be described as the confidence of a society in the moral character of a person, which is quite important within interpersonal relations with others. The philosophy of face can be classified into two types: “*脸 lian*” and “*面子 mianzi*”. *Lian* represents the confidence of society in the integrity of ego’s moral character; loss of it makes it impossible to function properly within the community, while *mianzi* stands for the kind of prestige that is emphasized, a reputation achieved through getting on in life, through success and ostentation. “Face” is important within Chinese social relations; it affects goodwill and is related to power and influence. The loss of *lian* would result in a loss of trust within a social and business network, while the loss of *mianzi* would result in a loss of authority (Faure & Fang 2008). Loss of *lian* within a “*关系网 guanxiwang*” as a consequence of opportunistic behaviour meaning that peers will no longer have confidence on the person or concerned firms. However, the “face” helps minimizing the possibility of opportunistic behaviour within a *guanxiwang* and constitutes the basis of the respect, and it finds its foundation in the Confucius’ virtues of the respect of authority and elderly. The face is mutual; it is an accepted norm that as “old friends” one should give face to others when favour is requested. The face, hierarchy, and authority are closely related in the creation and development of the Chinese business network.

Intercultural Communication and Language

Swartz and Alland (1980) noted that different languages organize the world differently; no individual is free to describe with absolute impartiality what he observes in other cultures because he must be constrained by certain modes of interpretation. Therefore, the same physical evidence does not lead all observers to the same picture of the universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar. Contrary to Africans, Chinese are portrayed to be non-verbal people. However, it is quite often in some African countries, business relationships are usually established rather based on friendships than business competitiveness. In Africa, the language still and represents a sensitive asset and it is often incrustated with proverbs, idioms, and riddles that can even make the communication more difficult to understand. An African proverb says “*the stranger who returns from a journey may tell all he has seen, but he cannot explain all*”; because to explain all, you must share the people’s language categories. Italians added: “*Traduttore traditore*”, which means, “translators are traitors”. In the same standpoint, French say: « *Les traductions sont comme les femmes: lorsqu’elles sont belles, elles ne sont pas fidèles, et lorsqu’elles sont fidèles, elles ne sont pas belles* », which means “translations are like women: when they are beautiful, they are not faithful, and when they are faithful, they are not beautiful”.

These sayings depict the complexity of the communication and how difficult it is to convey information coherently and accurately in intercultural environment. Thus, the relation between the interactional language and cultural values represent an important factor in business. It is obvious that the language represents the symbol of communication, however it is not possible to bring everything across language barriers; in other words there is no perfect translation; it nonetheless helps to determine how people encode messages, meanings, conditions and directives under which various messages may or may not be noticed or interpreted (Samovar et al., 1981). It is obvious that communication is the basis of culture, it is characterized by the verb and non-verbal language and substantially has consequences on cross-cultural management. Therefore, to succeed in cross-cultural environment, it is relatively important to have a basic knowledge of the cultural background of the country in which foreign companies are stepping for business, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Biko (1978) observed, Westerners have in many occasions been surprised at the capacity of Africans for talking to each other not for the sake of arriving at a particular conclusion but merely to enjoy the communication for its own sake. Among other factors, one of the big cleavages between Africans and Chinese in the intercultural communication dwells on the conceptual way of thinking and dealing with things (Miahouakana, 2008).

Basic characteristics of chinese in business

Although several scholars have analysed the influence of cultural diversity on managerial issues in China (Hofstede et al. 2007), and examined the role played by “*关系 guanxi*” or “relationship” (Luo 2007, Gu, Hung & Tse 2008), and of other fundamental Chinese cultural determinants such as: “*家庭 jiating*” or “family”, “*人情 renqing*” or “social relationship”, “*感情 ganqing*” or “feeling”, “*脸 lian or 面子 mianzi*” or “face”, “*理解 lijie*” or “understanding” and “*客气 keqi*” or “politeness” as well as “*风俗习惯 fengsuxiguan*” or “habits and customs”(Leung & Chan 2003, Fang 2006). Thus, Guanxi is characterized by the interpersonal ties and can be described as a personal connection, in which an individual is able to convince another to accomplish a favour or service. As above-mentioned, *guanxi* is completed by other fundamental elements, which are also essential to consider such as: a)- *Jiating*, which particularly reflects Chinese family relations.

Faure and Fang (2008) noted that the family represents the foundation of the Chinese society and considerably influence Chinese behaviour; b)- *Renqing* represents the moral obligation to maintain the relationship and deals with the exchange of favours, in respect of social norms and behavioural patterns; c)- *Ganqing* reflects the depth of feeling within interpersonal relationships. According to Haley (2006a), *ganqing* plays a central role in maintaining and developing relations based on *guanxi*, and able to change impersonal business relationships into personal connections; d)- The concepts of *Lian* and *mianzi* are related to the idea of “*face*”. *Lian* can be described as the confidence of a society in the moral character of a person, while *mianzi* represents social perceptions of the prestige of a person; e)- *Lijie* and *keqi* refer to custom and etiquette of empathy between two people; f)- *Fengsuxiguan* reflects tradition and past orientation of the Chinese society. Qian, et al. (2007) considered that tradition and past orientation might impact on the behaviour of Chinese individuals. These characteristics define and symbolize some of the main Chinese cultural values, which influence cultural dimensions, beliefs, principles, and business behaviours.

Fundamental characteristics of Africans business

As written by Geert Hofstede (2001), "Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy. Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster." This study has summarized some guidelines and principles leading to specific conduct toward Sub-Saharan countries; knowledge of these principles is not only helpful, but also critical, to succeed when operating in this business environment. They could also be stated as the core of African management principles based on the concept of *Ubuntu* (Mbigi, 1995), original came South Africa means "*humanity toward others*". They represent managerial strategies including paternal leadership, management practices, consultation, and HRM's core root and allow you to gain insight into the cultural intricacies of managing business in Sub-Saharan Africa: —Humanity is a shared value in which personhood exists within a group context, only in so far as person values. Rooted from this principle, modern African companies are structured so that every team member is given a meaningful role to play. Concern revolves around team rather than individual interests. Personal achievement is underplayed in favour of group achievement (Booyesen, 1999); —Employee teams work most effectively, achieving cohesiveness and solidarity, by working toward a common purpose (Mbigi, 1995). The business management system is rooted on the traditions and ideals and many African organisations are often structured like families owned business (FOB)—reflecting the regional history, ethnic origins, linguistic structure, and even the family background of the founders (Fadiman, 1994). Africans are motivated to work in teams and are loyal to their own group. Emphasis is placed on collective decision-making. Conformity, collaboration, and cooperation are encouraged (Booyesen, 1999). Competition is discouraged, as is individuality; —Stress is placed on maintaining peace and keeping conflict to a minimum by promoting internal, communal, and familial harmony (Shonhiwa, 2008).

Thus, interconnectedness and communal relationships, dignity, and mutual respect are very highly valued (Lassiter, 1999); —African companies are often structured like African families and, therefore, organizational leaders and managers tend to behave with paternal responsibility toward their staff members. The leaders are expected to be more supportive and even somewhat intrusive, providing advice on matters both personal and professional, and also to be more parental by nature, working to maintain group harmony, solving employees' personal problems, and generally to be considerate and helpful. In addition, they should exhibit the capacity of facilitating collective decision-making, exercise strong listening and problem-solving skills, and should also respect and encourage groups' loyalties; —The age of the person is important to consider when operating in business area. In the business relationship, the age of the subject constitutes an important factor; while advanced age is inherently equated with authority, business wisdom, rank, title, and experience. Thus, an older person automatically holds a certain level of superiority, regardless of rank, title, or education; —The time standards are ambiguous, and thus require flexibility on the part of non-African managers. Western time restrictions and deadlines do not apply, and must be unfortunately a bit fat. As mentioned previously, Sub-Saharan Africans have an acute sense of solidarity and communal life. A clear perspective of this value provides deep insights into the principles that drive business practices, behaviour patterns, and communication structures.

Conclusion

The current study reported a broad comparison of the cross-cultural values between Chinese and Africans, and underlined their possible impact on the business structure. In addition, the paper provided differences and synergies on cultural backgrounds among Africans and Chinese. Usually gaining access to political leaders' network in Africa represents an important asset for foreign companies to step into the African market; however it is reasonable to assume that foreign companies interested in investing in Sub-Saharan Africa with a long-term perspective need to consider the different cultural aspects reviewed in this study to construct profitable relationships. The paper provides also a set of features, which may allow expatriate managers to build up their business strategies and have a basic knowledge of the cultural background in Sub-Saharan Africa. A better understanding of these factors is essential to comprehend stakeholders' behaviour and attitudes within African labours and leaders. To surmount cultural barriers in this business area, expatriate managers are encouraged to gain a comprehensive understanding of the local cultural traits. The findings of the study are crucial to implement human resource management (HRM) policies and management practices in Sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, from a narrow point of view, the paper supports expatriate managers and CEOs to define their business strategies and to increase local workforce performances. The knowledge of these cultural values can be taken has a competitive strategic tool for expatriates to prevail over cultural barriers, improve attitudes, qualifications and performance levels of their activities as well as to boost the company competitive advantage.

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